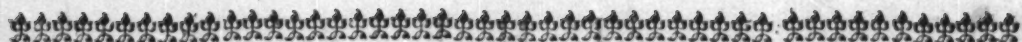

THE
CHURCH
OF
ENGLAND
Free from the
IMPUTATION
OF
POPERY.



THIS Discourse was wrot and printed by the
Command of the late Lord Bishop of *London*,
and about the Year 1682; as the Reader will per-
ceive from some Passages, peculiarly respecting that
Time. The Truths it suggests, were not judg'd then
to be Unseasonable: and that they needed not to be
Repeated Now, none would be more glad than the pre-
sent Editor.



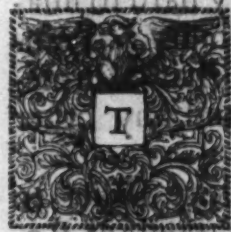
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POPERY.



THE Case between the Church of England, and the Dissenters from it, requiring not much of Learning or Speculation; it might well seem to be no difficult Matter, to see into the bottom of it, and clear the Difference. And indeed the Duty of Obedience in things indifferent, and the Obligation of each Christian to preserve the Unity of the Church are so convincing; and the Expediency of some Ceremonies in general, and the Innocence of ours in particular so plain; that the Reconciliation of our Brethren to us, upon the view of our Reasons, and the Answers we have given to their Scruples, might be easily expected: were there not some general Prejudice upon the Minds of otherwise well-disposed Men, that, like an Interposing Mist, either diverts the Light that is ready to come in, or lets it not appear in its own Colour.

And this seems to be no other than the Opinion many have been possess'd with, that our Worship is Popery; and that to return to our Communion is to make a step towards Rome, and to join Company with those that are going thither. For this Conceit once entertained, a Minister of the Church of England is a disguised Emissary of the Romish Church; and all the Arguments and Persuasions he offers for Conformity, are received no better, than if he was endeavouring to

The Imputation of Popery upon the Church of England, is—

pervert to the Papal Superstition. If we speak to them of the *Common Prayer*, they think of the *Mass*; and while we discourse to them of the Fitness and Lawfulness of Kneeling at the Communion, they imagine nothing else but the Worship of the Host, and the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

By whose Malice and Artifice soever this Prejudice has been raised and cherished; they, we must confess, have gained their Point by it: They have stopt the Ears, and blinded the Eyes of those that otherwise would know the Voice, and distinguish the Persons of their Brethren. The Aversion of the People deservedly raised against Popery, they have had the skill to turn against the greatest and best Church of the Reformation: and they have had the Pleasure to put her under the most sensible Affliction; of lying under an Imputation she so much abhors, and hearing her self reckoned amongst those she has so openly and so justly condemned.

None can be ignorant how far this Prejudice has prevailed, and with what Success: though indeed it is a Conceit so unlikely and inconsistent, that we might well expect no rational Person should have entertained it. And did not Popery let us know what gross Absurdities may find Credit with the Ignorant; it would be very hard to imagine, how any Belief should be given to such an Impossibility: Transubstantiation it self being as conceivable a Thing, as that a Protestant, really of our Church, should be a Papist too; and any other Contradiction as easily reconciled as that.

Neither can they fairly object *Ignorance*, and an implicate Belief to the Papists, who know so little the Constitution of the Protestant Religion, as not to see it in our Church: and who resign themselves to their Teachers so far, as with the same credulity to call our Church *Papish*, with which the *Papists* are taught to call it Heretical.

So Causeless, I hope, and Groundless will this mischievous Calumny appear, to all those that shall consider: and all those will be willing to consider, that do not wilfully chuse a Mistake, so scandalously unjust to a great Reformed Church, and so destructive and ruinous to the whole Reformation. As therefore they would not be found ignorant of the Religion they profess; as they would not continue so highly Uncharitable to their Brethren; nor be guilty of the Ruin, of what they would be thought so much to contend for: if there be in them any love of Truth, any care of Justice, any tenderness of Conscience, any concern for the Publick Cause and our Common Religion, let them think of these Things.

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In the first place therefore, to begin with the Unreasonableness in general of this Jealousy, wherewith some Men are prepossessed. Who would not stand amazed to hear that Church styled Popish, the Purity of whose Faith has been declared so expressly, so illustriously attested and spoken of through all the World? Know they, or care they what they say, that say this of a Church, that has solemnly and positively disowned all the Usurped Authority; and condemned all the false Doctrines of the *Roman* See, its Supremacy, Infallibility, Transubstantion, Worship of Angels and Saints, Purgatory, &c. that has not done this in a Corner, or in the Ear, but proclaimed it on the House-top; that like a City set upon a Hill, has been as high and eminent on the one side, as *Rome* it self, with its seven boasted Hills, has been on the other; and has as remarkably opposed the Errors of that Church, as ever they had been advanced? What a new wonder must this be to the World, to hear the Church constituted by *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, accused of Popery; the Faith and Worship suspected to be Unreformed, which was delivered down to us by those great Martyrs? Is this the Reward of a Church, whose Sons have given so loud a Testimony against the *Roman*, in their Lives and by their Death; who have still born the burden and heat of the Day; who have felt the fiercest Rage of the Enemy, and have returned them the deadliest Wounds; who have been foremost still in all Encounters, all along in the last Age, and in our own, the famous and the victorious Champions of the Protestant Cause? If this Church, and these Men, after the Declaration made in our Articles, after repeated Subscriptions and Abrenunciations, after all this zealous opposition of Popery, must be yet suspected of Popery; as well on the other side may the Decrees of the Council of *Trent* be said to comply with the Reformation, and the Pope himself be thought a Protestant.

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One would imagine from the Suspicions of these Men that traduce us, that there was some small inconsiderable Difference betwixt the Papists and us; something that might easily be reconciled: not that we differ as much from them, in all necessary Points, as those very Persons they pretend to follow. For let all the Harmony of Protestant Confessions be consulted, and see if we are not of the Harmony, and our Articles do not conspire with theirs; if ours are not as express, and as directly opposite to the *Roman* Church; if there can be any Hopes of Reconciling us, sooner than of Reconciling them.

For though there are of the Protestants that retain not some indifferent Ceremonies which we have; (and that we might well do it you will see presently) yet it is to be supposed they would not stand out
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against the *Roman* Church on that account, if the rest were well agreed. If they could once allow their Transubstantiation, Worship of Images, &c. If they could endure their Superstitious Rites; they would not stick at what might remain of a little ancient Order and received Decency; and were that all, would as soon return to *Rome* as we.

Nothing can make an honest Man suspect our Church of Popery, but his Ignorance what Popery is. He may take all that to be Popish, which the Papists do and believe; and presume those guilty of their Superstitions, who do not dissent to their whole Creed, and are not Nonconformists to their whole Practice: and in his Opinion the purest Church of the Reformation must be that, which is most opposite to the Church of *Rome*. But he forgets then that the Church of *Rome* is Christian still, though abominably corrupted; that to run contrary to her in all things, must be to deny our God and Saviour; that by this Rule we must lay aside their Scripture as well as their Traditions, and neither give Alms, fast, nor pray, because it is the Practice of that Church. He considers not that an Anti-Papist is in a much worse condition than the Papist himself; and that if we take what the Pope proposes in gross and together, it is infinitely more dangerous to reject all, than to admit it.

By Popery therefore can be meant nothing, but the Corruptions that Church has suffered, and the Usurpations it has advanced. For the Faith of that Church was once as far spoken of as now its Errors are; and had she continued in that Purity, we ought to have been of her Communion: and now we are to depart from her, no otherwise than she shall be found to have departed from her self, to have varied from the Truth, and to have corrupted the Doctrine that was once delivered to the Saints.

Now the Test whereby these Doctrines are to be examined, whether they are Popish (that is corrupt) or no; is this, Whether or no they are Consonant to the Holy Scriptures: this being the common Principle and Touchstone with all Protestants, That nothing is to be believed or practised as necessary to Salvation, but what is contained in the Scripture; and that nothing is to be believed or practised in any manner whatsoever that is contrariant to it. This is the Principle that is delivered to us with the New Testament, by the first Ages that received and transmitted it: and by this Test their Additional Traditionary Doctrines fall; their Infallibility proves the greatest Falsity, and their Illimited Jurisdiction is cut off; the number of the Sacraments is retrenched; their Worship of the
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Host, of Images; their Prayers to Saints, for those in Purgatory, or in an unknown Tongue, are taken away; whatever was imposed as necessary to Salvation, and had no Warrant from God's Word, or was otherwise proposed, and yet repugnant to it; such Errors and Corruptions as you will find marked out in our Book of Articles, and there distinctly condemned.

But though nothing is to be enjoined as necessary to Salvation, but what God himself, the Author of our Salvation, has declared; yet we are not to think that no Circumstance is to be used in his Service, that he has not distinctly commanded: this being no Protestant Doctrine, but the greatest Falsity. For then no Action that is even of Necessity to be performed, could be performed, had not God prescribed the Circumstance too. Whereas on the contrary, there cannot be a plainer Truth than this in the World, that he who orders an Action to be performed, and orders no Circumstance, must be supposed therefore to leave the choice of the Circumstance to Discretion. And it is as clear, that in such Cases, where in private we are left to our private Choice; there in publick, we are to be directed by the publick Discretion, the Election of the Superiors: provided always that in both Cases no Circumstance be used, that is contrary to the Intention of the Action, and the Will of God.

It was therefore in the Power of our Spiritual Governours after they had retrenched, what they were constrained to take away, all that was unlawfully believed or practised, Idolatrous, Superstitious, or Erroneous; to retain or reject as they should see Cause, all indifferent circumstantial Things; which as they were not commanded by God, so neither were they forbidden by him. Innumerable Ceremonies therefore they cut off: some inseparable Companions of the Falsities and Superstitions they had abolished, some impertinent to the main Action, others choaking or incumbring it: and some too they left; so few, that they rather expected to be asked, why no more; and those the freest from Offence, and the fittest to be retained. For they considered that an innocent useful Ceremony, which had either been laudably used before Popery came in, or was not proper to the Superstition to which it had been annexed; when purged of that Superstition, was restored to its Innocence and Indifference; and might be used as lawfully now, as in its first State. And therefore though they took the liberty to leave off several Rites however in themselves Innocent, and in use before Popery began, because they were of little Edification, yet they kept up others which appeared more necessary
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to the Church: and which at the same time might shew both their Temper and Moderation towards the Modern *Roman*, which they were forc'd to leave; and their respect to the Primitive, which they desired to imitate.

And with such a view as this, if you will look upon the Particulars for which we are accused, you will see how little of Popery that is, Corruption or Superstition there is to be found.

The Particulars in which we chiefly differ, are these: Government by Bishops, a Liturgy of some Ancient Prayers, Kneeling at the Communion, the Cross at Baptism, the Surplice, and the Observation of some Christian Fasts and Feasts.

First then, as to Government by Bishops: had it been a thing purely indifferent, we might have lawfully retained it; and our Church might have taken leave to have chosen a sort of Aristocracy, as others have been pleased with a kind of Democracy. But take it as it is, intimated in the Writings of the Apostles, and manifestly of their Institution; we then had been obliged to reduce it, if the *Roman* Government had been *Presbyterian*. When we found it therefore there, what Reason had we to abolish it? Shall we allow the Pope so much Power, as to make that unlawful by his Use; which the Apostles and their Disciples have recommended to us, by theirs?

2. As to our Liturgy of some Ancient Prayers: is it Popish as a set Form? Or as a Form of those Prayers? A Set Form is so expedient and necessary to the Church; if but for the sake of the People (that they may be sure to have no other Petitions suggested than what are fit, that their Devotion may not suffer by the Weakness or Indiscretion of the Minister, that they may know beforehand how to prepare their Thoughts, what frame of Spirit is to be brought to Church), that I may take leave to say, had a Set Form been used, not only in the Superstitions of *Rome*, but in the Charms of a Magician, it ought however to be used in the Service of God. If the Papists, if the Heathens used Set Forms, because it was the most certain, orderly and best considered Way, fittest for the Worship of a God; must we therefore be forbid? Because they did well, are we therefore to do worse? And so for the Prayers themselves: they are most of them elder than Popery, and no more Popish than the Lord's Prayer. And if there are any of their Composure; yet if they are good, and according to the Will of God, why may they not be offered to him by us,

us, as well as by them? Nay, may they not be more acceptable to God, as they may be a Testimony how willing we would be to keep the Unity of his Church; and to join with all Christians, were we permitted, in all their Devotions? If our Accusers would shew us any Popery in our Prayers: they ought to shew us where we pray to any but God, or for any thing for which we want his Warrant; where we use any Intercession, but our Saviours; or what part of our *English* Language is an unknown Tongue.

3. The Surplice, is nothing but an innocent Habit made of Linen, which is appointed to be the Dress of the Priest when he Officiates. It cannot but be acknowledged, that it is a fit point of Decency to assign all that are in Orders some certain Fashion of Garment in Publick, if but in the Streets, and when they appear abroad. And if this be a Gown, and the Papists wear one too, is a Gown therefore Popish? In like manner as the Ministers of the Church are directed to an uniform Decency abroad; so particularly, and with the same innocent Intention they are ordered to wear a distinct Robe, when they perform the Publick Service in the Church: that as the common Devotion is administred by a Person set apart, in a Place and at a Time set apart, so it may be done too in a peculiar Garment. And if the Papists do so too, even so let them; they do well. If they had invented the Garment, we need not have scrupled to follow this one *Italian* Fashion. But they took it up from earlier Custom: and it is no more Popery, than the Ministers, than the Citizens, the Lawyers, or the Judges Garments. If they could say we placed any Sanctity in it, attributed any Efficacy to it, it would be something; but as we use it, it may as well be a piece of Popery, to be at Church with a Band, or with a Crevat.

4. Kneeling at the Communion, is far too from being Popish; that is, either a Corruption or Superstition. The Papists indeed kneel to the Host, as to their God: but not so particularly then, when they receive it; as when immediately after Consecration, it is elevated, and shewn to them for that purpose by the Priest. But we that Kneel when we receive the Communion, Kneel not *TO IT*, but *AT IT*. And what Posture can there be fitter for those, that in the deepest Sense of their own great Unworthiness, and of God's unexpressible Mercy, are going to take the Seal of their Pardon, and the Pledge of their Salvation? what better Posture would they have for those,

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that at that time are to be in the Highest Acts of Devotion; the most relenting Contrition, and the most dutiful Thanksgiving? If on that Occasion the Papists Kneel too, and with a wrong Intention; why should any Fault of theirs hinder me from expressing my Duty? What they do on no Reason, why should not I do on the Best; especially when we have so solemnly disclaimed theirs, and so expressly declared our own? As we are not to disuse the Holy Sacrament, because the Papists have made it an Idol; so may we continue our Reverence, tho' they have paid it Adoration.

5. The Cross in Baptism, or rather after Baptism, has in it as little of Popery too. To worship the Cross, to ascribe any Virtue to the Sign, or to promise ones self any Defence from it, may be Popery: but to use it as a Sign, only to signify and declare, can never come under that Notion, nor be termed Superstition; no more than it would be to pronounce the Word. Tho' the Cross was *Foolishness to the Greeks, a Stumbling-block to the Jews*; and has been since to the *Papists* too, a Stumbling-block and an Idol: yet are we still to Glory in it, and to have the Memorial of it in an high and precious Esteem; neither concerned on one hand at the *Gentiles* Mockery, nor on the other at the *Roman* Superstition. The Primitive Christians, it is certain, us'd the Sign in the Earliest Times, very frequently: with that on all Occasions they put themselves in Mind of our Saviour's Suffering for them; and with that they arm'd themselves against their own. So they saluted their Brethren, and so they defied the Heathen. It was the common Token and Mark of those that belonged to Christ; and was afterwards the Imperial Banner of the Great *Constantine*, the first Christian Emperor; and under that (by the Grace of God) were those Victories obtained, that put an end to the Heathen Persecutions. Our first Reformers therefore finding the Cross of Christ made the Subject of much Superstition among the Romanists, its Image Worshipped, and I do not know what Virtue imputed to the Signs; and yet remembering withal, the Devout Practice of the first and best Ages; as they abhorred to countenance the one, so they were tender too of condemning the other: and in that Intention, after the Sacrament of Baptism is administred, the Priest is ordered, when he declares audibly the Admission of the Child into Christ's Flock, to declare Visibly too by that known blessed Sign, what that Shame is, the Christian ought to despise; how he is openly always, and as it were on his Forehead, to bear the Profession of his Faith; what that

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Banner is under which he is now Listed, and in what Warfare he stands engag'd: our Church applying that to its Members once at least in their Lives, which the Primitive repeated so often; and doing that on so proper an Occasion, which heretofore had been done on all; in hopes of being excused on the part of the Ancient Christians, by its Care to avoid the Faulty Practice of the Papists; and in hopes of being justified to its Members and Brethren, by so great, and so reverend an Authority. And that it might be impossible for any Standerby, how weak soever, to fall into any Superstition himself, or to suspect it in the Minister; he never uses the Action Dumb, but proclaims the Edifying Signification, and speaks out in plain Words the wholesome Meaning. This was a Sign nobly and generously taken up by the Elder Christians, in the midst of their Blaspheming Heathen Neighbours; owned now with the like Courage under the insulting *Mahumetan*: a Lesson as necessary for that part of Christendom, that confines now upon the *Turk*; and not to be look'd upon as Unreasonable or Improper, by those Nations that, by the Mercy of God, have yet a better Neighbourhood; always of great Edification to the Devout, but particularly to be remembered by those whom Commerce carries into remoter Countries; where tho', if Report mistake not, it has by some been most scandalously forgot. So clear and free is the Sign of the Cross, as used by us, from the least shadow of Superstition.

6. *Lastly*, The Fasts and Feasts of the Church come as unjustly under the same groundless Imputation. The Time of Assembling, is a Circumstance of our Worship that cannot be left to particular Choice, but must be determined in Common; and what is to be done at that Time, must be determined too for any Orderly Assembly: so that it must be left to the Discretion of the Governors, when we are to keep a Festival, and when a Fast. As to the keeping of the Lord's Day; our Church was not at Liberty: without she would have rashly departed from Apostolical Observation, and the continued Practice of all Ages and Places since the beginning of Christianity. As for the keeping of *Easter*; she was too under the like Obligation: the Annual Feast of the Resurrection, the Great Lords Day, being known to have been the Chief, and the Cause of all the Weekly. And as to the Fast of Good Friday; it was nigh as early as the Feast of the Resurrection. They lamented their Sins our Saviour died for, on the Friday before; as constantly as they commemorated His Ri-

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sing again for our Salvation, the Sunday after. And in Order to the keeping of those two Great Days with more Devotion, there was likewise in the Church some time beforehand set apart, for better Recollection, and greater Preparation: the number of Days in some Places more, in some less. That of Forty, no Superstitious Number, had obtained in the *Western* Country; and therefore was still kept: and would to God it were as Religiously observed, as it was piously appointed. *Whitsunday* too, the Day on which the Holy Ghost descended, was Observed always, and Universally by the Ancient Church. Only the Nativity of our Saviour was of later remembrance; but yet before *Popery* came in: first observed in the *Western* Church; and afterwards taken up by the *Eastern*, in St. *Chrysostom's* Time, as it stands recommended by him to the People of *Antioch*. Other Times besides these, have been appointed too for our Religious Assemblies; in which besides the general Worship of God, the Examples of his Saints and Martyrs are gratefully remembred, and piously proposed; and those Days are called commonly by the Name of the Person then particularly Commemorated: not that the Worship is to the Saint, or that the Day is employed in his Honour; only because on the Occasion of his Memory or Martyrdom we come together, as to pay our other Duties to our God, so to thank him for the Graces of his Servant, and to be edified and instructed by the Example. It is true the Church heretofore, when God had been bountiful to them in the Number of his Saints, increased in some Proportion those Days of his Worship: and it is to be confessed, that *Popery* had both acknowledged Saints to God, which he might not own; and gave the True Saints an Honour which they must disclaim. But with us the number of those Days is not greater than that the Affairs of the World may well comply; and as the number of the Apostles is not large, so their Sanctity sure is unquestionable: and then on those Days we neither beseech by their Merits, nor recommend our selves to their Intercession. You see then how unreasonable the Objection of *Popery* is here too; but see to what Absurdity it goes on. First it is supposed *Popery*, to keep a Day in the Memory of an Apostle; and then it is thought as Popish to call him a Saint. A Great Person at *Geneva*, it seems, presumed it somewhat *Popish* to observe Sunday itself; and considered about changing the Day. Nay some are so perversly Superstitious on the other hand; as that That Day, on which all the Christian World remembers our Saviour's *Bitter Passion*, has seemed to them the fitter for a Feast; and the Time Universally now set apart for the joyful

joyful Memory of his blessed Nativity, the more proper for a Fast. This indeed is not like the *Papists*: No, it is like a *Jew* or a *Heathen*.

So I hope it has sufficiently appeared, how little guilty those Usages are of the Popery of which they are accused: the Chief Design of these Papers. But having not been able to Discourse of their Innocence without some Discovery of their use, I shall crave the Readers Patience for a short Digression: wherein he may see that the first Governours of our Reformed Church did not only use their Liberty, and impose them as things indifferent; but as things expedient, and to which they were obliged in all Godly Prudence.

For although the Persons who now enforce this account, may think so much of themselves, as that the weakest of their possible Jealousies ought to have been considered most: yet the first Reformers were not to engage themselves in a Task so endless, nor to content themselves with so narrow a view. Several other Respects more weighty, and things more practicable, did expect their Care.

For in the Reformation there were more Considerations to be had, than some are pleased, or capable, to understand. There was a regard to Truth, to Increase of Piety, to Gravity and Decency: to Antiquity; to all the Modern Churches, the *Roman* it self, the *Grecian*, and the then Reformed: Regards then had, and ever since to be continued. They were indeed to provide in the first Place, that their prescribed Rites should be such as might not in any manner reasonably offend their own Members; but be the most fit to raise and promote their Devotion: they were too at the same time to take care, that no Offence should be given to other Churches, no just Scandal even to that they left.

For as to the Church of *Rome*; tho' we were forced to part from Her, it was to be with all Christian Meekness and Charity; with a desire that she would return to Her self and us; and would at last follow the Reformation, which she had been often desired to begin. And therefore when we cut off her Corruptions and Superstitions, we retained some of her most laudable and ancient Ways: not leaving them tho' Godly and Venerable, because practised by Her, as the Spirit of Opposition would have directed; but for that Cause the rather practising them our Selves, as it was fit for Christians and Brethren. All the Innocent Ceremonies indeed we did not keep: because their Number was excessively great, and they of small or no Edification. Tho' under that Burden we could have been content to rest, had that been the only Dispute, and were it to have been the Condition

Condition of our Peace. But the Tyranny of their Corruptions, by which they forc'd us out of their Communion, having restored us to our First Liberty; and taken off that Human Right, or Usurpation, by which their Bishops pretended Authority over Ours (from a Prescription whose Date we know): we used then that Liberty too in other Matters; and both shewed that we were not under Bondage, and that we were in Charity; leaving that Church a Pattern for Her to imitate, and Using towards her a Temper by which she was not needlessly provoked.

So did the first Reformers discharge their Duty towards the *Roman Church*: by this Conduct giving to the Sober and Well-minded all reason to commend us, and taking away from the Rest all occasion to Blaspheme: reducing themselves in all Material Points, to the Standard of the *Primitive Church*; and in lesser Matters taking leave to vary, as several Countries then of the Same Age had used to do: in Hopes that other Nations would by the Grace of God be at last invited by so fair an Example; we not proposing our selves so much, as the ancient Church, to their Imitation.

The same Apology might too be satisfactory to the *Greek Church*; from whom if we differ in Doctrines or Worship, it was because we presumed our selves constrained by the Truth so to do. But that we affected not wantonly an unnecessary Contrariety, they might perceive; by our choosing some such Customs as had the general Approbation, and by conforming to ancient Usage: a Church of another Climate not being to expect that we of the *North-West* should agree in all; but that it might appear by common Practice of some Things, that it was not out of Opposition that we had abstained from the rest.

Such Respect there was to be to the *Roman* and *Greek Churches*. There was too a Consideration of the Reformed, the *Lutheran*: a chief Regard was to be had to her, and the upper Hand of Fellowship given as to the *Elder Sister*. She first had protested against the *Romish* Corruptions, stood the dangerous Shock of *Papal Tyranny*, and boldly advanced a Reformation; which too she planted wide, and settled in very powerful Countries. This noble Example our first Reformers follow'd: from them they learned to cast off all Modern Usurpation, and to restore according to the Earlier Pattern; not taking our Copy indeed from theirs, but from the same ancient Original, and tho' with some Difference, yet with a near Resemblance. Our Episcopacy, by the Piety of our Princes, was left more entire than with them, in some Places.

Places. The Doctrine of *Consubstantiation*, which determines the Mode of Christ's Real Presence at the Time of Participation, we were not satisfied in: but yet as they condemned the Idolatry and Superstitions of the *Popish Transubstantiation* equally with us; so did we equally with them adore the Mystery of the Holy Sacrament, and were ready to communicate on our Knees. After their Example, our Churches and Cathedrals were not neglected, the Places where God's Honour dwells; nor His Altars, where His Mercy and Love shew themselves forth. The Worship of the Soul was commanded to be expressed in the Posture of the Body; the Bowing at the Holy Name of *JESUS* recommended; and a decent Gravity every where kept up, tho' with fewer Ceremonies.

So serviceable were these Orders of ours in respect of the rest of *Christendom*, and so fit to be retained for their Edification in Love: the Fruit of which we had the Satisfaction to reap, not only from the Approbation of those our Brethren, not so well satisfied elsewhere; but from the Confession even of some *Romanists* themselves. They were too as proper for our own Edification, and for the Advancement of God's Worship here.

To that purpose these Rules were as exactly fitted, as if it had been the only Design. For what could have been better designed for the Honour of God, and Increase of Religion amongst Men, than that the People should be ordered (had it not been their Custom before) Solemnly to meet, to pay their Devotions on certain Days of the Week; that there should be Annual Commemorations of the Mysteries of our Redemption, and of the Zeal and Doctrines of the Blessed Apostles? And how could our Devotions be more Certain and Sufficient, more Grave and Regular, than under a well-considered Form? If the Minister were then in another Garment; did not the very Sight of him admonish, before the Exhortation began, that the People were to lay aside their ordinary Thoughts, not to meet him there as abroad, but to be a Holy Congregation? If they were directed to be on their Knees, at Prayers, and at the Communion; was it more than became their Duty, or a Hindrance think we to their Devotion? Or was it to be expected, that when a Congregation saw a Person admitted into their Number, and the Doctrine of the Cross declared over him, as the Terms of his Reception: they should be offended, that it was so evidently set forth, and declared to the Eye as well as to the Ear; and should so far forget its Benefits, as rather at that Time to think impertinently of an old Superstition that was gone, and of Popery
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that was abolished, than to join and recognize our Saviour's Death, and their former Vows, and zealously to resolve the Profession of their Holy Faith in Despight of all its Enemies? But on this Subject I proceed no further to the other unquestionable Parts of our Ritual: it being plain, that even the lesser Appointments have their proper Use.

When therefore the Reformation began, for such just Reasons, and several Respects to others and to our selves, was the present Form Established.

At that time the other Protestant Church of *Calvin's Model* (that the Reader may not think it forgot above) was but just set up in the narrow Territory of *Geneva*: and therefore, indeed, not much considered by our Reformers; only under their general Rule, that as they begged leave in indifferent Things to use their own Liberty, so they imposed not on other Churches. By our leave therefore the Reformers of that Place might have used fewer Ceremonies, and those of their own Invention: so they would be pleased not to dictate their Regulations as necessary Rules to us. Nay, even there, where otherwise we might think they had gone too far; the necessity of their Circumstances might have pleaded for them: provided they prescribed not their Orders and Discipline to Foreign Countries. Tho' therefore they had abrogated Episcopacy; though Lay-Elders, and Lay-Deacons were Novelties in the Church of Christ; tho' a perfect Liturgy was wanting; and they seemed in several Things to condemn the Ancient Church too much: yet they were still regarded by us as Brethren, their Correspondence desired, and Communion with them maintain'd.

But when the Neighbourhood of *Geneva* had, with the Doctrine of the Reformation, carried this peculiar Discipline into *France*: it began thence to come over hither as a Mode; and to take, it may be, the more because it was New. And then it was urged, not as convenient to the Circumstances of a little Town, or of a scattered distressed People under Popish Bishops; but as necessary to all that professed the Purity of the Gospel: and it was given out to be as fit to reform from us to them, as it was before from the Pope to us.

The first Rule of this new Method (I mean as imported and translated to us) was, to have no Circumstance in Divine Worship, that was not expressly determined in Scripture. By this Rule they cut off all our Establishments, as they thought, at once: but by this they could have none of their own; for their Elders were not to be found in the Text, considered better; and unordained Annual Deacons had

as little ground; not to mention their lesser Rites. That Rule therefore failing, they were to have another Measure of Purity: and that was, to be at the greatest possible Distance from the Church of *Rome*. And then we were to have no Bishops, because the Pope was one; we were not to pray to God at set Hours, or by a set Form, because the *Papists* did; we were to have no Christian Fasts or Feasts; and all our Observations, though never so Edifying and Primitive, were to be laid aside by those that would be pure, if they had been used at *Rome*.

We have already, though briefly, discovered the Falsity of both those Principles. The First was a gross Fallacy put upon the People by their Teachers: who, to the great Maxim of the Reformation, that no necessary Christian Doctrine was to be received not warrantable by Scripture; had Sophistically joined this great Untruth, That no Circumstance of Worship was to be used, that could not be shewed there. The other too, that condemned indifferently all the Practices of the *Roman* Church whatever, was nothing else but a Sophistical Imposture put in the place of this Truth, That none of its Corruptions were to be retained. It was nothing but a disingenuous unchristian Abuse of good Peoples Zeal: to make them dislike the good Usages of ours, and the ancient Church; with the same warmth, they rejected the Depravation of the *Roman*.

Either of these two Principles, if they had been true, would have put an end to this Dispute about Church Ceremonies: and therefore, though Baffled and Confuted, they failed not to be always inculcated into the Ears of the People. To prove the Rites of our Church unlawful, Step by Step; had been a troublesome Task, and might not have succeeded well: either the People might not have born the length of their Discourse, or seen through the Weakness. But here, to cut the Work short, they had a Maxim or two; that their Followers might easily apprehend, and it may be as easily swallow. And accordingly one or both of these, the People were always taught to believe. These were the little Lumps of Leaven that were cast in, and all along fermented the Nation; till the whole was Leavened and they were worked up at last to the utmost Perfection, and most exalted State, to the Holy Covenant: whose great Ends forsooth were, to pluck up Episcopacy Root and Branch as Popish; and to establish Presbytery, the Form of God's own Appointment.

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But these false Principles could not be fixed so: they were pursued by their own Party, and run down in Fact. For as to the first; there rose up those that could no more spy out Presbyterianism in the Bible, than they had been suffered to see Episcopacy before. Ministry and Tythes were not to be found in the Gospel, they said: they asked you your Text for every thing you did; for saying you rather than thou; for taking off the Hat before God or Man. And so as to the other Maxim; it was found out at last, that *Geneva* it self was not far from *Italy*; and Classes and Synods (who would have thought it?) were esteemed a little *Popish* too. If they valued themselves on their Distance from *Rome*, there were those that could go farther than they. The Independents presently outwent them; these were outstripped by others; and at last the Quaker seemed before them all. But all Things moving Circularly, these last came very nigh to that Point on the one Side, from which they were most remote on the other: instead of one pretending Infallible Spirit, we had Legions; and all the Opposition to the Pope of *Rome* ended in this, that every Man was to be Pope himself.

These were the visible and palpable Absurdities, consequent to those two false Maxims: and those Maxims have been mentioned here upon occasion indeed of the *Geneva* Reformation; but with no design of undue Reflection: they being but Additions grafted on that way, since it was brought into *England*; not natural nor proper to it, though with us too closely combined: ridiculous Untruths of a destructive Nature, to be disclaimed and discountenanced by all sober Men.

However, our Foreign Brethren of that Constitution, as their Form of Government was design'd for themselves, and not for us, for a Bond of Peace and Discipline at home, and not to give Disturbance abroad: so they will, we do not question, give us leave to think so well of our own Way, as not to be willing to exchange it for any other; that may in Charity be allowed to stand on equal Terms, but will not we hope, pretend Advantage.

For Good Men, and who know the Grounds and Reasons of our Reformation, were at a loss, what the late Design might mean, of bringing our Church nearer to the Protestants abroad: to those of our Brethren of *Calvin's* Way, we suppose they intended. We hope the Intention was not to insinuate an unjust Reproach; as if we had not the Amity and Affection for them which we ought; did

did not rejoice in their Edification, or compassionate their Affliction: but only this, to alter our Constitution into a nearer Resemblance with theirs. But if any of ours desired this for Amendment, as a farther Reformation and greater Perfection; it was because they were not pleased to consider their own Frame well: nor could any honest Man of our Church, and who understood her right, have ever consented. And if the Design was only Political, (though the Policy appears not) yet why might it not be as fit for those Protestants to come nearer to us? But, not to stand on such Terms, how could we have went nigher to the *Calvinist*, without departing from the *Lutheran*? Our Church is already in the middle, and reaching out her Hands on either Side: settled there long ago, by weighty Reason, and upon mature Deliberation. For although the Word Protestant has been here at Home appropriated to a Party; and the Reformed Church abroad has been still understood only for those of one Way: yet every one knows that the *Lutheran* is the first Reformed, and that the Term Protestant is only proper to them; and particularly to those only of the *German* Nation. This then is the first Fallacy endeavoured to be put upon the People; that those to whom some of our Dissenters pretend a nearer Approach, are the only Reformed and Protestants in the World: as if the *Lutheran* was not to be understood by his own Name. The other is this, that the *Calvinist* is so great, that the other deserves not to be mentioned: whereas the other have still been the far greater Number, and the much more considerable. Our Trade indeed, makes us look into *Holland*, where though the true *Calvinist* makes not above a third of the People; and our Fashions into *France*, and would to God their Numbers encreased there; we speak much of *Switzerland*, and the *Lower Palatinate*: but we forget to take notice of the large Countries that are entirely of the other Profession; as *Denmark*, *Sweden*, the Dominions of the Elector of *Saxony*, and *Brandenburg*, of the Great House of *Lunenbourg*, and the many Imperial Cities. So that the Design mentioned before of coming nearer to the Reformation abroad, was nothing else but this: to persuade us to go farther from the Universal Church Primitive; from the major part of the Modern Reformed; from our innocent Agreement with general Christianity; and from those of our selves, who are much edified by our Present Constitution: to come nearer to those abroad, who (to speak in the fairest Language) are not better constituted than our

selves; and to comply with those at Home, who are certainly neither the greater, nor the best part of us; to give way to the falsest and most destructive Prejudices, opposite to all Catholick Agreement; and to countenance and encourage a most causeless and seditious Separation.

But to return from this Digression: We have seen upon the view of the Particulars most in Question, no Popery in them, no Superstition nor Idolatry, no Favour nor Tendency to any of the *Roman* Corruptions; nothing in them that is not directed to the promoting of God's Honour, the raising of our Devotion, and the Teaching of our Duty; nothing but what either was in use before Popery took Place, or must be allowed commendable even in the Papists themselves.

And yet notwithstanding all the zealous Abhorrence our first Reformers had for Popery, declared by their Writings, and confirmed by the Testimony of their Deaths; notwithstanding the constant continued Professions of the same Faith, still made by all that officiate in the Church; although all possible Care has been taken to prevent the Suspicion, and disavow all Popish Intention; yet our Church is Popish, and we all Papists still: The grossest and the most inexcusable Calumny that ever was invented.

We have seen already to what Ends this notorious Untruth was first devised by the Dissenting Party; to widen the Separation, to fix Men in it, and to keep them at an irreconcilable Distance. But I cannot tell whether it had not been more excusable before God and Man to have separated upon no Reason, than upon one so scandalously false. They had then only been accountable for their departure, and forsaking us; but now besides, for all this Injustice which they have done us, and the Calumnies under which they have left us. For so under the Old Law, where a Man might at Pleasure have put away his Wife; and without Cause shewn: yet if he had given occasion of Speech against her, and brought an evil Name upon her, had accused her to have been corrupt; he was then by the Judgment of the Elders to make Reparation by a Pecuniary Mulct, to suffer corporal Chastisement, and not to put her away for ever. If then those Persons had not in them that Brotherly Love which should have made them desirous of our Company; not that Sense of their Duty to our common Father, by which we are obliged to make our joynt Appearance before Him: yet in common Justice they should have forbore their Slanders;

II. Scandalously Injurious to it: &c.

ders; and in Reverence to the God of Truth, they should not have condemned us so rashly, especially in Matters that concern him. For seems it so small a Thing to any Man, especially to one that professes a more tender Sense of his Duty, to accuse one rashly and falsely before God and the World, of Superstitions, Abominations, and Idolatry; of perverting the Gospel of Christ and corrupting his Worship; of carrying the Souls of Men into Error and Sin, and endangering their eternal Salvation? Were this Scandal spoken of any single Priest, that had the Care of the smallest Parish, what sufficient Satisfaction could be made him? But when it is spoke of the Pastors and Teachers of a Great People, of the Constitution and Frame of a whole National Church; what amends shall be given them? For here the Consideration is not only of Disreputation and loss of Honour, unjustly sustained; but of the horrible Mischiefs that have followed: nor do those suffer so much, of whom the Scandal is said, as those do who credit and entertain it. The greatest Prejudice is not to us, but to those who on that Account are gone from us: who have been scared by it into Schism, and Faction; have been engaged in Uncharitableness, and the Breach of the Peace of God, the Unity of his Church; into Heats and Animosities, into Temporal and Spiritual Disobedience; who have been thence perverted into deadly Errors and Heresies; and hastning from us have run upon Rocks, and made Shipwrack of their Faith. These are the Damages of that wicked Scandal, to be estimated by the Hazard and Perdition of thousands of Souls: the Loss is to the Catholick Church, and to be answered for hereafter to the Great Shepherd. So big is this foul Slander of infinite Mischief: tho' its single Guilt be so great, that it needs no Accumulation.

Judge not that ye be not judged, says our Lord and Master: and *who art thou that judgest anothers Servant?* says his blessed Apostle. So unwarrantable and dangerous a Thing it is to pass a hasty peremptory Sentence, even upon our Fellows and Equals, in any Thing that relates to God: It is to attempt upon his Authority, and usurp his Seat. He then that passes a Sentence notoriously unjust, what is he to expect at the Day of the righteous Judgment of God? And *who art thou that so judgest not only anothers Servant, but thy own Superior,* and whom the Great Master has commanded thee to obey? If thy Slanders were against any foreign Sister Church of God; it were a high Breach of Charity, for which you ought to beg

beg Pardon of Christendom: but to calumniate maliciously ones own Church, and to charge her falsely with the highest Crimes; is a Lye not only against those to whom you owe common Respect, but to whom you are to pay Duty and Subjection; it is as if you blasphemed your Father or your Mother.

But to pass away from such sad Considerations, on which tho' the concerned should reflect very seriously; and to conclude in the easiest and most favourable manner: Those that go this way to destroy our Reputation with the Vulgar, have not provided well for their own, with intelligent Men. They will not after this be well able to make good their Pretences to much Knowledge, and their Profession of greater Zeal for Truth. For the difference betwixt us and Popery is so wide; that those who accuse us of it, except they excuse themselves by Ignorance, cannot be well allowed by the World to boast of Conscience and Integrity.

I cannot tell whether most of the Teachers are not directly guilty of this great Untruth. However, whether or no they preach it for positive Doctrine, yet this we are sure of; there is nothing more common with their Auditors: It is this Fancy that keeps them fast to their own Way, and gives them their greatest Aversion for us.

Some of the People indeed out of Ignorance, are betrayed into this Slander: and yet there too the Ignorance is something too Gross, and too easy to be removed; than that it should qualify the Fault much. They need for better Information but peruse our Articles of Religion, which are very short; and look into our Prayers, a Book in every ones Hand; they need but come to those near Places, where the Law and their Duty calls them; and have Patience to hear their proper Teachers: And therefore even this their Ignorance is too much their Fault, to become their Defence.

But however this blind Zeal, and weak Ignorance of the People, if it shall be allowed in Plea for them; must it not then be charged upon those, who have usurped the Care of them? Those who have unwarrantably, and in their own Wrong, taken upon them their Instruction; are they not to answer for this culpable want of Knowledge? But how careful should they be, that they do not beget these uncharitable Prejudices, nor disingenuously cherish such Untruths; that they are not the Causes of that Weakness, and the Authors of the Ignorance?

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For from whence is it, that those People should be supposed to bring such Prejudices, but from the Discourses of their Meetings? Do they not there find Popery and our Church in a Breath? The Rites of that Church so mentioned, as to include ours? and themselves flattered with the Title of True Protestants, to our Exclusion? If they do not there broadly call the Surplice, a Rag of *Babylon*; or our Prayers, the *English Mass*: yet are not Will-Worship, and Superstition, carnal Ordinances, and Idolatry, spoken out on those Occasions? And the People given to understand by oblique Reflections, and peculiar Phrases, that there is as little Difference, as they have heard Distinction?

Hence it comes to pass, that the true bred Dissenter will no more come into our Church, than into a House of *Rimmon*: a Cathedral is a very Abomination. To be at Prayers, would be to be at Mass: and if you ask them their Exception at the Book; they thank God, they have never look'd in't. They leave their Friends before they are buried, they are so frightened at the Service that is to be said; as if the Parson in White were an Apparition. And when a Relation of theirs is to be Christned, tho' the Office be performed at Home, in no superstitious Place: yet they will not assist at that for which they came; and fly away from the Sign of the Cross as fast, as the Papists fancy evil Spirits do. Or if any of these upon Surprise or Mistake, chance to be present at the Prayers; they take care to shew their Aversion by their Looks and Gesture, and put themselves streight in some cross Posture of Body, or Disposition of Mind: If the Minister calls to kneel, they will chuse to sit; and when the holy Words he pronounces speak the Worship of God, Praises or Prayers to him, they devoutly think of the Superstition or Ignorance of the Priest, and smile at the Folly of the rest. Such Prophanation do a great part of them take our Worship to be: and so fearful are they of partaking in it.

These are the ridiculous and truly ignorant Conceits of their better meaning Followers: highly Unjust to us, but most Scandalous to their own Teachers. But these absurd Fancies are not more ridiculous, than the Pretences their Leaders draw from them: When they desire Allowance for the Weaknesses of those they have made so; and would have the Government on all Occasions to indulge such Errors, as they shall be able to reach: Using the old known Method; instructing the People to fancy Grievances first,
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and then in their Name, but for their own Interest, importuning a Redress.

But these Leaders of the Party might consult better for the Weakness of their People, if they would try to cure it by better Information; and they might easily acquit themselves of the Guilt of Slandering our Church, by beginning to do her Right. Let them then for once come nearer the Reformed Churches abroad themselves, and own that to the World, which Those have never scrupled to declare. Let them honestly tell their Congregations the plain Truth: that we detest and renounce the Popish Corruptions and Superstitions as much as those Churches do; that the Belief and Doctrine of our Church is the same with theirs; that the very few Ceremonies we have retained, have nothing of Sin or Abomination in them. Let them confess that a good devout Prayer is never the less so, for being provided before hand, or read out of a Book, or by one in White, and not in Black or Gray; that if the People will but bring their Thoughts to Church as well prepared as the Words are, they will be heard most acceptably by their God. Let them own that there is no more harm in the Sign of the Cross made by the Hand, than in the Word that signifies it from the Mouth: and that Men may be as innocently shewn one Way as another, what Thing they are not to be ashamed of. Let them acknowledge that there is no more Sin intended, in being on our Knees at the Communion; than there is in being truly penitent, and humbly thankful. And lastly, to Sum up all, let them but declare that a Christian of our Communion, who worships God as is prescribed him there, and believes and obeys the Doctrine there taught him, is by the Grace of Christ in the ordinary way of Salvation. Let them, I say, but publish this to those Numbers they have called together (and if they are Truths, in Conscience they are bound to do it;) they may then be heard to excuse themselves from the blind uncharitableness and unrighteous Slanders of their Auditors, against a Church of Christ, so fam'd and so great a part of the Reformation.

Hitherto I have only represented the strange Injustice offered to our Church; an undeniable and demonstrable Injustice: Neither is it my Intention to speak of that Personal one, under which its Ministers have suffered besides. The ground indeed for such a Jealousy, is not impossible in Nature: but it is from the same want of Charity, that those Persons who are under the greatest Obligations

tions of Conscience against Popery, must be thought its greatest Favourers. If in a Multitude one or two single Men may have been under the Suspicion of having Apostatized; yet how does that affect the rest of the Body, who will be the first to disown and renounce them? Were the eleven remaining Apostles to be termed Traytors, for Judas? Or is our Nation to be denominated, from the few Malefactors of its number, which it punishes as soon as it discovers? We have of Church-men some too it may be inclinable to the Separation: Why are not the Dissenters pleased then for their sakes, to think favourably of the whole; and to let us all be true Protestants on the one Side, by the same Reason we are Papists on the other? But is it not strange, that those who have distinctly subscribed to the Articles of the Reformation, at each Degree in the University, at the Promotion to either Orders, at their Institution to any Preferment; who have publicly read and owned these Articles in their several Congregations; that those who have given all manner of assurance to the World: must be suspected still, and traduced, by those that have yet given none; of whom we know not yet, if they themselves do, but at random and at large, of what profession of Religion they are? God pardon them their Uncharitableness; and we are to thank them, that they have not made us *Jews* or *Mahumetans*.

It may have been enough to all honest Men, and truly conscientious, to have shewn them the Untruth of the Prejudice that has been raised against our Church, and the Iniquity of the irreligious Slander: as they feared God; so they would be afraid to speak Evil falsely of a Church of Christ, and of the Service of their Maker. Nay, we might hope that such, upon the first Reflection, would be the more hasty and forward to return to our Communion; lest they should seem any longer to countenance so unjust and ungodly a Calumny. But they may be pleased to consider farther, not only the Sinfulness, but the Mischief of the Action: and that we are not so sensible of the Injustice done to our selves; as of its ill Consequences, the Damage and Prejudice it brings on the Cause of the Reformation.

III. Pernicious to the Cause of the Reformation.

The Differences and Schisms that have happened in the Protestant Churches have, it is known, been very scandalous to the common Cause, and formed into an Argument against us. It is said by our Adversaries, that as soon as we fell from them, we fell

from Unity and Order; and that the Infinite Folly of the following Separations, was but a Consequent natural to the First: that it was a Spirit of Pride and Opposition that engaged us first in the Schism; and that we had no Bowels for the Divisions of the Church. See therefore, say they, how they break into endless Fractions; they are no more tender of their own Communion, than they were of ours; they part out of Humour and Fancy; and in this they do us right, they submit to no other Constitution.

It is true, that the wantonness and petulance of Men has given too much place to this Reproach already: but when the measure of a thorough Reformation shall be the utmost Opposition to *Rome*, and a Protestant Church quarrelled and reputed *Papist* for some common innocent Usages; then it is that the *Romish* Advocates may triumph well, then may they justly insult. *Here, say they, you discover the right Protestant Temper; you may see in the true Protestant, and the true Reformed, the true Spirit of Contradiction:* How upon a Pique to us, they fall out with all *Christendom*; and will leave the Churches of all Ages for our sakes: Let us but use what is Primitive or Orderly; and we may have them as Indecent, Confused, and Ridiculous as we please.

For the truth is, the Principle those Men have chose, does not only scandalously condemn the Churches of the Second and Third Ages: but it is the most inconvenient that could be imagined; and may bring them into as great Absurdities, as they endeavour to avoid. From this Maxim the Church of *Rome* may take its Measures, and manage if they please the humour of Opposition, as easily as a Vow of Obedience: it is but their taking one Side, and our Sectaries are bound to take the other; they are to be led by Contraries, and out of a childish crossness will refuse, what the other would seem to direct. So may the *Romanist* appropriate to himself all Gravity, Decency, and Antiquity: and should he reform, may he not expect that these would quit the Reformation.

This is the direct tendency of the Principle; and this way it goes, though the *Papist* may not think fit to follow it. However we have seen what occasion of Obloquy and Reproach it gives, and what a Disparagement and Dis-reputation it brings on the Cause of the Reformation: Shameful to our selves, and an Offence to those that otherwise might come to us. We may now see in the next Place, how it operates by the Odium it fastens on
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our Church, and what Mischief it produces there; how convenient and serviceable the Scandal is to the Designs of *Rome*, if not invented, yet fomented by them; and it self therefore to be esteemed *Popish*, for much better Reason than our Ceremonies have been.

For after the Reformation was, by the Grace of God, once brought about; and the Church of *Rome* could not hinder her Corruptions from being seen, and her Usurpations from being laid open: all that they in their Craft could devise, or the Malice of the Devil could have suggested, was to divide and dis-unite those that were gone away, and to promote Variance and Disagreement between us. But the Design was never more Artificial, than when they were able to raise a Jealousy, that one part of this Reformation was *Popish* still: and could make Men overlook all the substantial difference of this Church from that of *Rome*; and conclude them the same, only from the common use of some indifferent Things. The Church of *England*, they found, had manifested their Depravations, exposed them beyond any Defence, and raised up a fixed and resolute Indignation against them. This Zeal, as long as it was sober, rational, and well grounded, they could not possibly withstand: They try therefore whether they cannot divert it upon something else, and direct it against its own Party: whether they cannot take this Artillery, turn it upon something Laudable and Innocent, and level it against its Friends. Being hatred to Popery is unavoidable, let the *English* Church be *Popish* too. So, are the *Romanists* content, if we may come in for a share of the Guilt, that not only part of their Worship, but the whole may be reputed Corrupt: and they are ready to help to accuse themselves in the wrong Place, that the Charge may fall upon those that are in the Right.

And now the *Romish* Emissaries have accomplished their Errand, in one Sense. If they have not perverted those of our Communion, yet they have seduced others to believe it done: and we are become all *Papists*; at least in the Opinion of the Dissenter. If he may be believed, and we are to be added to the number: the *Roman* Catholiks are vastly encreased: and well may they have the Reputation abroad, to be very considerable in their Country; at least well may their Priests report, that we are inclinable to return, and easy to be reconciled; when they have the concurring Testimony for it of the Sectary, their seeming Adversary. And this, though but a Mistake and Fame, yet has its Effect: it keeps

up the hope of the Principals at *Rome*, and redoubles the endeavours of their Seminaries. But they have too a more certain and real Aim.

For by this Opinion they may either gain some of us to themselves; or be sure however by the Jealousy, to keep us asunder one from another. They may hope that some, even of our Communion, may at last have a more favourable Esteem of the Religion, to which they have been joined so long by Report; and that here, as it happens sometimes in Marriage, we may be content to embrace that Faith, to which Fame has said we were contracted before. But to the Honour of our Church be it spoken, this has not been effected, neither by the Carresses of one, nor Affronts of the other; neither out of Affection, nor Indignation. So little Tendency is there in our Constitution that way, of which we have been unreasonably suspected. Their great Hopes, I suppose, of this kind are upon the Party that pretends to be most averse, and makes at present the more clamorous and extravagant Opposition. For it may be rational to presume, that he that knows not the Reasons nor Intent of the Reformation, and makes nothing of the vast Difference between us and *Rome*; may easily therefore step over it, and be as willing to return to them as us. It may be enough to make such a Convert, to satisfy him in the sign of the Cross, or kneeling at the Communion: as soon as he finds himself convinced of the Lawfulness of that Popery; he may be willing to yield to the rest, and may comply as undiscerningly as before he abhorred. Such an Intention as this, we may see is feasible enough: how far it has been practised in Fact, I will not say; or whether the *Quakers* have not been justly suspected.

For making of Profelytes, the *Romanists* cannot have a more proper Method, than to infect the People with Prejudices against us; to hinder them from settling on the true certain Bottom, the Foundation so well laid by the first Reformers; and from keeping in that Church which is so sure a place, and may be so easily maintained. However, besides the Converts they gain, by the Jealousies they infuse; they heighten our Divisions and Animosities, break and scatter us: they hinder us from joining in what might oppose them, and prevail that we have no common Interest. Nay, things have been sometimes brought to that pass, that the Sectarians have rather joined with the Papists themselves; and in publick Counsels confederated with their pretended Enemies, to impeach our better Establish-

Establishment. So much Popish were we then, that the professed *Roman Catholick* was less.

And now by force of this accursed Scandal, see into what Difficulty the Church is brought: either engaged in a perpetual, intestine Quarrel if she stands as she is; or else obliged to change at the Pleasure, and by the Direction of her sworn Enemies. If she thinks fit to stand on her own Bottom, where so many good and necessary Considerations have fixed her, and where she has rested so long: she must then expect the continuance of all the Dissenting Out-cries; nay, want of Moderation reproached, and the Schism imputed to her, even by some of her own Popular Sons. If she shall be inclinable to comply, where she lawfully may; yet there the humorous Exceptions are so various and so unreasonable, that she sees no good Issue; and has no reason to presume, that the Faction desires to be content, neither can she tell what Church she shall be at last, if she is to alter still, as often as her Establishments shall be accused to correspond with *Rome*.

Now the Church of *Rome*, which has fixed her self invariably upon the Council of *Trent*, and for the same reason would have its Adversaries unsettled still; most willingly sees us alter, shift and change: not only that the Uneasiness, Inconstancy, and Uncertainty may be verified upon us, with which they sometime reproach us; that ours may be still wavering, and more easily drawn to them; and that theirs may be unwilling to come to us, into a Body so mutable, and after a whole Age so little satisfied of the lawfulness of its Rites and Usages; but in hopes too, nay, out of certain Prospect, that by such Changes we shall be further from Settlement than before, and nearer to the Dissolution they would endeavour.

The demanded Alterations, it is plain, are not for the Satisfaction of those that are of our Communion; but of those that are not: and by such our own may be scandalized and shaken; but the others will hardly be obliged. For when we are ready to change, not moved by Arguments and Reasons, (for those are most Frivolous and Sophistical) but to comply with Fancy, or gratify Opposition: the Humour, it is certain, will be the more hard to satisfy; and Obstinacy, when encouraged, will only learn to ask more; especially when the Principle by which they move, is full of endless Dissatisfaction, and has an equal quarrel against the whole Constitution. So that when they have effected one Alteration, they have

have only made way for another; and are never like to rest, till they have destroyed the whole. Now for Example, The Surplice, the Cross, and Kneeling at the Sacrament, are demanded to be released: the particular Objections against them are quite out of Countenance, and no longer pressed; only that General one of Popery, or a General scrupulous Fancy and Humour which they call Conscience, are now urged. It is evident then, that it is as easy a matter for the same Masters of these Scruples to teach their Auditors, for as worthy Reasons, to be dissatisfied with more: and it is as plain that they have already taught them a general Aversion. Should they be excused Kneeling at the Sacrament, themselves; might it not then be a great Offence to see the Minister, or any other kneel? As now they pretend an Offence at the Sign of the Cross, tho' they themselves look only on. Would they not think themselves obliged to avoid the very Sight, and separate from the Communion, of that Popish Practice? Is, think ye, the Consecration Prayer free from all Suspicion? The Reverence prescribed in handling of the Elements, may come near the Idolatry of the Host; and the whole Service be accused for the Mass. Is the Cross after Baptism mentioned by them, because they have forgot their Quarrel at God-Fathers; and have a better Opinion of the Office of Confirmation? The Gown may as well be disputed as the Surplice: Episcopal Orders may be thought a very indifferent Thing: and are they content enough with the Rank of Bishops themselves? The whole Form of Prayer has its Faults; and how many are there for no Form at all? So that it is evident those Things are rather asked to begin, and break Ground for further Approaches: there are neither better Reasons, nor is there more Contrariety against them, than against the other parts of our Constitution. Only these three Circumstantials are most visible, the one upon the Minister, and the other at either of the Sacraments; and so may be signal enough for a dissenting Triumph: a present ease to their Scruples, which they will please to accept, in earnest of what is to follow.

Were there any just Reason for the Scruple of the meanest Person, or inconsiderable Number, God forbid but the Church should give Redress. And could it have been presumed, that the Schism would be healed by the removing of those three Ceremonies, however innocent and edifying; they would no doubt have been remitted long ago. But the Governours of the Church

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know well, what the Spirit and Genius of the Dissent is; and to what it drives; upon what Causes it is founded, and the medley of the Persons that are engaged in it: how small a Part the sincerely Scrupulous make; and how the Harmless are in the Hands of the Crafty, and the Weak managed by the Sturdy: that the prevailing governing Party are not to be satisfied with a Ceremony or two, but with more substantial Things; nay, that Religion it self is but a Circumstance to their other Designs. This our Superiours know: who want not the Charity or Condescension, that any Reconciler would recommend; but are obliged in all holy Prudence, and their Duty to the Church, to take in more Considerations, than perchance a private Writer may comprehend. They are to be as innocent as Doves, but as wise as the Serpents themselves. But this is beyond the Design of this Paragraph: the Scope of which is only this, That if Things are but indifferently well, to change is always extreme inconvenient, but then most especially when there will be no probable stop; that the Papist will be as well pleased with such Alterations as the Dissenter; and neither fully satisfied, but with our total Abolition.

So is a Change, tho' in Things perfectly Indifferent, no indifferent Thing. But all Things called indifferent are not of equal Indifference: and particularly the change, this Maxim we are speaking of would persuade, which the Dissenters endeavour, and our Popish Adversaries wish, is still for the worse. The one pretends to see Popery in our Government and Rituals: the other with Grief sees ancient Order, and approved Decency retained; and the Primitive Church restored. These are sensible with what Disadvantage they encounter us: that here is no Novelty to reproach; and that the Truly Catholick Church is of our Side. They have a Church in their Sight, as it were one of the first Ages revived; upbraiding them by its Presence, and discovering the Counterfeit by the Comparison. To disorder and confound this, is the Folly of the one Party, and the Interest of the other: to drive us off from the Ground, on which we stand with so much Advantage; to take away from her all Order and Beauty; and to strip her of all the Marks of Antiquity, and Badges of Catholick Agreement. So shall we be that, which the Enemies of our Church desire; their Scorn and Mockery first, and afterwards their easy Prey: while having our Eyes only upon *Rome*, and running still backwards

wards from her; we fall into the Snare, that she has laid behind us.

It were to be wished, that those who are so jealous of our Symbolizing with *Rome* in indifferent Things; would be as cautious in joining with her in her pernicious Designs, and conspiring to the Ruin of the Reformation. If they will take their Measures in Opposition to Popery; let them then close with that Church which is most hated by the Pope; and come in and help to defend that Place, against which he bends his greatest Force. And let them take care, lest, if they know Popery so little now, as to accuse us of it; they assist not that Religion so long and so effectually, till they bring it in indeed, and learn what it is by a dear Experiment.

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